



FACT Sheet

Children's Administration

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL & HEALTH SERVICES

Why allow visitation between a child and a parent from whom the child has been removed?

Early, consistent, and frequent visits are crucial for maintaining the parent-child relationship. Visiting is necessary to develop appropriate connections between parents and children. Purposeful visits improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes.

Visits are the right of the family including the child and parent, when in the best interest of the child. The agency shall encourage the maximum parent and child contact possible, when in the best interest of the child.

For a child in out-of-home care, visits with parents and siblings should be a planned event and conducted in the least restrictive and least intrusive manner, while maintaining safety for the child.



Parent-child visitation

What is parent-child visitation?

Parent and child visitation is the process by which parents whom have had their children removed due to child maltreatment or neglect can maintain contact and connection with their children while children are in out-of-home placements.

The primary purpose of visitation is to maintain the parent-child relationship and other family attachments, and to reduce the sense of loss and/or abandonment which children experience at placement.

What levels of parent-child visitation supervision may be recommended?

If parent-child visitation is deemed safe and in the best interest of the child/children involved, there are three levels of visitation supervision that may be granted by the courts.

- **Supervised:** Highest level of supervision, visitation supervisor maintains visual contact with the child and all parties to the visit at all times during the visit.
- **Monitored:** The visitation supervisor is on site during the parent-child visit and provides periodic observations approximately every 15 minutes throughout the visit.
- **Unsupervised:** Visitation staff transport child to and from agreed upon locations for the visits; and are not responsible for supervising or monitoring the visit.

The contracted visit supervisor must provide a report of the visit to the child's DSHS social worker within five days following the visit.

Who decides what level of visitation is required?

The courts decide if, when, and possibly where parent-child visits will take place, and bases the decision on a number of factors including recommendations from:

- Psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists
- Social workers
- Family members
- Children's Guardians ad Litem and Court Appointed Special Advocates

Where can parent-child visits take place?

- Children's Administration or Contracted Service Provider Office
- A location such as a public park or restaurant
- Parent-child home
- Relative home
- Foster home



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In supervised visitation, who supervises the visit?

The visits may be supervised by a DSHS social worker or by a qualified visitation supervisor contracted by the Department.

Must visitation supervisors have certain qualifications?

Visitation supervisors must be qualified, trained, and experienced and must pass a background check. Potential visitation supervisors complete an application process and verify that they:

- Have a high school diploma or GED
- Are at least 20 years old
- Have one year of experience caring for or supervising children
- Are knowledgeable in the areas of client safety assessment and planning, problem solving, and crisis intervention
- Are currently certified in first aid and CPR
- Possess a current driver's license with no history of DUI
- Possess proof of insurance

What is the training requirement for visitation supervisors?

Visitation supervisors must complete at a minimum, no fewer than twenty hours of training on numerous topics including but not limited to:

- Child abuse and neglect
- Conflict resolution
- Domestic Violence
- Family Dynamics
- Conflict resolution and problem solving
- Communications skills
- Behavior Management
- Children's Administration visitation policy, practices, and procedures

Who decides when parent-child visits end, increase, change location or other changes are made to the visitation plan?

- No changes can be made to court ordered visitation unless approved by the court unless safety, health or the best interest of the child is compromised. This is visit specific.
- Social workers are not able to limit visitation as a sanction against non compliance.

For more information about Parent-child visitation or other Children's Administration topics, please contact: Sherry Hill, Children's Administration Communications Director: 360-902-7892 or Sherry.Hill@dshs.wa.gov
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